

The Bridge

ISSUE
03
March
2013

A monthly newsletter for educators from the
New Jersey Department of Education



Evaluation and Educator Effectiveness Issue

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In this Issue...

Educators are at the heart of our school system. The New Jersey Department of Education knows that educators are dedicated to serving students and improving their practice. We have embarked on a multi-year program of research and development to construct an evaluation system that will assess educator performance, because educators deserve clear expectations and structured, meaningful supports as they continue to grow in their practice. Adoption of the new evaluation systems will entail a shift away from compliance-based, low-impact, and mostly perfunctory evaluations to a focus on educators as career professionals who receive meaningful feedback and opportunities for growth.

On March 6, we will introduce regulations outlining the requirements of the TEACHNJ Act, the transformative tenure legislation that was passed unanimously by the legislature in the summer of 2012. While these new regulations outline the broad strokes of a new evaluation system, we have been working with educators over the past two years through a series of pilots to collaboratively develop new evaluation systems that will help all educators continuously improve their practice.

This issue of The Bridge focuses on educator evaluation, and we will give you the latest updates, highlight some pilot districts, and talk about some of the

stakeholder groups helping to inform decisions about evaluation, but it is important to remember that evaluation is not something that exists in a vacuum. The Common Core standards, which are currently being implemented across the state, provide standards for what our students should know and help guide the formation of lessons that our teachers will be evaluated on. This month, we will take a look at how Common Core is being used by English Language Learners and kindergarteners.

When it comes to learning and assessment, there are many factors that influence our students and so we will explore the importance of good nutrition and the School Breakfast Program.

In honor of Women's History Month, we would like to leave you with the immortal words of a great woman and champion of social justice, Eleanor Roosevelt, "Surely, in the light of history, it is more intelligent to hope rather than to fear, to try rather than not to try. For one thing we know beyond all doubt: Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, 'It can't be done.' "



New Jersey
Department of Education

Notes from the Road

I've often wondered what would happen if you took a group of exceptional teachers and put them in the same room together. What would that dynamic look like? What commonalities amongst the different educational backgrounds would I find? Well, this month, at the National Teacher of the Year Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, I got my answer.

The week was phenomenal, the talent and expertise of these teachers was incredible! What resonated with me the most was how humble we, as educators, all are. Everyone in the room wanted to talk about what was happening in the classrooms around them and throughout the country. As State Teachers of the Year, we all see ourselves as vessels carrying the messages from all the teachers of our states or territories.

While we were discussing teacher effectiveness, qualities of an effective teacher, the value of properly evaluating teachers and the training required to do so, the energy in the room was palpable. We shared a common desire, to help push education forward and build capacity within our schools and states. The concern was: HOW? How do we implement all of the initiatives and with the proper supports? What teachers and school districts need more than ever is time: time to collaborate, time to self-reflect, time to analyze data, time to learn the new initiatives and create an efficient and consistent plan of action. The higher the expectations are set, and we should have high expectations, the more time we need to effectively implement a plan of success.

My goal during the next several months is to research that "how." I hope to learn how we can provide the supports that are necessary, build capacity and help teachers and school districts elevate the teaching profession. In my travels during the next few months, I hope to hear some great ideas from the field about what is working and share them with the Department of Education in order to benefit all educators.

by Lauren Marrocco, State Teacher of the Year

District Evaluation Pilot Spotlight: Collingswood

Quality training for teachers and evaluators is a key component of effective implementation efforts in pilot districts. The Collingswood School District, under the leadership of Dr. Scott Oswald, has utilized the following turnkey training model:

- A cadre of teachers was invited to participate in evaluator training to learn to lead turnkey training opportunities for remaining members of the staff.
- Turnkey teacher trainers were supported by the District Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (DEAC) with collaborative planning and training materials.
- Trainers were mobilized as specialists on particular areas of the teacher practice rubric. Staff members rotated from trainer to trainer in a jigsaw model.
- Issues that required follow up and clarification were captured during turnkey training sessions and returned to the DEAC, where targeted communication was planned.
- Forward-going, turnkey trainers continue to engage with staff members to ensure that all teachers are developing a clear picture of the criteria by which they will be evaluated.

According to Dr. Oswald, “I am pleased with the open minds with which our staff is entering this new endeavor. As with most school districts, there is a lot going on right now for teachers...over and above putting their energy into doing great things with the students in their classrooms. Our DEAC members, trainers, and teachers in general have faced this new challenge with positive attitudes and open minds. Our teachers have been the key to our success thus far.”

To read more about the great work of other pilot districts, please view our District Spotlight page <http://education.state.nj.us/feature/DistrictSpotlight.php>.

The Bridge

EVALUATION UPDATE

The effort to improve educator evaluation in New Jersey has been a top priority since 2010. Woven into the fabric of this initiative is the need to strike a balance between two important drivers: a sense of urgency to make changes that will benefit students and educators, and a strong desire to proceed thoughtfully and to incorporate feedback from New Jersey educators along the way.

In the last month, three important reports were released that have statewide and national implications. The Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) Interim Report and the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education (RUGSE) Year 1 Report address the first year (2011-2102) of the teacher evaluation pilot in New Jersey. The final report comes from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Culminating Findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project's Three-Year Study, which sought to answer the questions: Can measures of effective teaching identify teachers who better help students learn?; How much weight should be placed on each measure of effective teaching when combining classroom observations, student surveys, and student achievement gains?; And how can teachers be assured trustworthy results from classroom observations? The MET Study affirms two core principles, that effective teaching can be measured and effective educators impact student achievement. It also tells us that the best way to measure effectiveness is by multiple measures. In New Jersey, that means that educators will never be judged on the results of one test, observation or other assessment, but instead on a combination of measures of effective practice and student outcomes.

In New Jersey one of the most important outcomes of the first year of the pilot is that the new evaluation system has led to a positive culture shift in the form of a collective refocus on the elements of effective teaching. This includes the development – sometimes for the first time – of a common language and definitions of good teaching as they engage in a collaborative process to help all educators improve their practice. This reaffirms that collaboration is a two way street and in order to be successful, clear communications channels must be established at the school, district and state level.

As part of our measured approach the Department has used multiple sources of guidance; the lessons we have learned from the pilot, research and stakeholder groups have helped to form regulations that will be proposed in early March. However, this doesn't mean that we are done. The evaluation system will be continuously improved as we learn from implementation about the challenges and successes and gather feedback from educators. Changes to regulation are possible for future years to reflect lessons learned. While we recognize that this is difficult work, we are confident that it is work worth doing and we are encouraged by evidence that shows we are moving in the right direction.

Throughout March and April, the Department will be doing regional presentations to communicate details of these regulations. You can register for one of the forums here: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/events/>

Resources on Evaluation, including the most recent policy memo on Evaluation Research, Reports and Policy Development can be found here: <http://www.nj.gov/education/EE4NJ/presources/>

Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC)



The Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) is one of several sources of feedback that the Department is using to guide the evaluation process in NJ. In the summer of 2011, EPAC was designed as per a recommendation from the Educator Effectiveness Task Force (EETF) which directed the Department to solicit feedback from stakeholder groups. EPAC's charge is two-fold: to identify and make recommendations for pilot implementation and statewide roll out of an evaluation, and to provide written recommendations in July 2012 for statewide rollout. Any recommendations made by EPAC must fall within the broad outline described by the EETF.

The 22 EPAC members represent a diverse cross section of the New Jersey educational landscape including teachers, school administrators, parents, school board members, representatives from charter, private and vocational schools and the higher education community. Two representatives from each district's District Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (DEAC) also attend the EPAC meetings. During the first year, roughly 80 members, 25 of whom were teachers, served on EPAC. In year two of the pilot program, EPAC's membership has expanded to reflect the addition of new districts.

Since September 2011, EPAC has met once a month during the school year. Meetings consist of presentations by national and state experts, updates from the Department, a report from pilot districts and subcommittee work. Members are there to learn and provide recommendations on a number of areas including early childhood, English language learners, school leaders, professional development and school culture, special education, summative ratings and teaching practice. In the second year of the pilot, these discussions continue around topics such as frequency and duration of observations, and non-tested grades and subject areas.



Implementing Common Core State Standards in Kindergarten

Kindergarten teachers play a critical role in helping students graduate from high school ready for college and career, which is the goal of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). But what does this really mean for teachers of five- and six-year-olds? Should kindergarten children be writing essays for their college entrance applications? Of course not. But most kindergarten teachers struggle with how to implement the standards in developmentally appropriate ways without using the typical skill and drill approach.

The new standards expect that teachers will take individual and collaborative responsibility for understanding each component of the CCSS and use them as a means to reflect on practice in order to deepen children's learning. At the Marlboro Early Learning Center (MELC), Marlboro Township Public Schools, Dr. Renee Whelan, principal, asked teachers to pair up to reflect on this question: "What activities that integrated the standards have you done recently that got children really excited about learning?" It encourages discussion about the lessons that most deeply engage children in challenging, interdisciplinary, authentic investigations and projects where teachers are encouraged to use their strengths to build on children's interests while exploring topics grounded in the standards.

MELC kindergarten teachers shared their strategies for embedding the standards. Linda Winter explained that "I

try to capitalize on things that are meaningful for children, such as Hurricane Sandy." Elyse Scheiner added, "I offer as much hands-on learning as possible. We use a lot of manipulatives for math and focus on centers, where children can be productive and independent." Anna DeSantis showed us a map of one project, "The World Around Us," which included a study of weather systems, hibernation, migration and habitats. "Over the summer, I start creating a project web that includes all the standards," Anna said. Lisa Lisnow emphasizes the importance of observing children and documenting what children are learning to inform instruction.

There are a number of ways that these teachers encourage children to talk, think creatively, move around, solve problems, and explore with their sense: observing children's animated conversations while exploring with paper mache or painting at the easel; skillfully reading books created by the class (independently and in partners); engaging in collaborative problem solving during a challenging computer game on the Promethean board; and speculating about the snacking behaviors of animals while on an outdoor trek to hang birdfeeders and hide peanuts near burrows. Skilled kindergarten teachers, such as those at the Marlboro Early Learning Center, create learning experiences for students that will not only prepare them for high school graduation, but for life in the twenty first century.

For additional kindergarten resources, go to <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/kl/>.

Model Curriculum Scaffolding for English Language Learners (ELLs)

The NJDOE is working to ensure that all teachers, not just those teaching specific content areas, have the tools they need to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Over the last year, a group of bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and supervisors from across New Jersey met to design student learning objectives for English Language Learners (ELL) based on the CCSS. The group designed a framework for English Language Arts that will assist all teachers in appropriately identifying the language which should be used in order to meet the requirements of the content standard as ELLs progress through the six developmental stages of language acquisition.

Since bilingual and dual language teachers use both the home language and English for instruction, administrators and teachers need to decide which Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to address in which language. For each SLO, the language objective defines what the English learner can be expected to process and produce at each proficiency level. The model also provides curriculum supports to help the teacher identify and develop the various proficiency levels of the SLO. A description of each support and an example of how it can be used is provided as a link within the framework document which

can be found here:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/modelcurriculum/ela/>

The framework is scaffolded so that performance indicators contain a language function, content stem and the level of support needed. First, the language function describes how the English learner will process or produce language. Second, the content stem is connected to the content standard and SLO. Third, the support indicates the level of scaffolding needed for the English learner to access the SLO. Early on, English learners often need more supports as they are mastering the language, but the more proficient they become the less supports are needed and the scaffolding is reduced.

General education, bilingual and ESL teachers will find this document helpful as they collaborate on unit and lesson planning to decide who will address which components of the SLO and language objective. ESL teachers may use the appropriate leveled language objective to build units and lessons for ELLs to reflect what is covered in the general education program. In this way, whether it is a pull-out or push-in model, all teachers are working on the same SLO connected to the CCSS. At the same time, ESL teachers at the middle and secondary levels may use this framework in their replacement classes. An acknowledgement of the developers of the model curriculum and a description of how to read and utilize the framework can be found here:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/modelcurriculum/ela/ELLOverview.pdf>

Food for Thought Campaign: Breakfast in the Classroom

Teachers know when students don't eat breakfast. The students are lethargic, have difficulty focusing, and think more about what is for lunch than the content you are teaching. They are also more likely to eat junk food to stop their stomachs from growling, but the sugar content and empty calories cause a different set of problems like disruptive behavior and lack of concentration.

In January 2012, Department of Education Commissioner Cerf and Department of Agriculture Secretary Fisher cosigned a memo to support the School Breakfast Program and encourage schools to increase participation among eligible students. The discussion about school breakfast arose nationally because millions of American school-age children qualify for federally funded meals.

In 2010 and 2011, New Jersey ranked 48th nationally for school breakfast consumption wherein only 28 percent of eligible children participated in breakfast at school. The statewide School Breakfast Multidisciplinary Committee includes representation from the NJDOE and is co-chaired by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) and the Anti-Hunger Coalition. The goal of the Committee is to increase breakfast consumption by 30 percent by the end of 2013. The primary strategy being utilized is serving breakfast in the classroom after the bell has rung to begin the school day. In response to the letter of support from the Commissioner and Secretary Fischer and with the advocacy efforts of the Committee, an increasing number of schools are implementing breakfast after the bell. As a result, New Jersey was just one of ten states to achieve a double-digit increase in the number of children receiving a healthy breakfast at school according to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) annual report released in January 2013 in which New Jersey moved up to rank 46th nationally.



NJ TEACHER SPOTLIGHT Lauren Rogers

Lauren Rogers has been teaching at Franklin School in the Bergenfield School District for thirteen years. She teaches fifth grade math, a subject she is passionate about. Lauren always knew she wanted to be a teacher, and has been helping to guide learners since she was a

lifeguard and swim coach when she was a teenager. With her new swimmers, Lauren recognized the value of experience in learning, "I had provided them with the knowledge, encouraged them to practice daily, and cheered every attempt along the way."

Today, Lauren still believes that experience and teamwork are keys to learning, whether it is conducting an experiment in class to have students collaborate and make an egg float, or helping a student to

form friendships and learn to trust. She believes that one of the improvements we can make in our schools is more exposure to cultural and historical experiential learning. By taking field trips, students can connect to the world around them, enhance their background knowledge and provide pictures in their mind's eye for expression. Without these experiences, students find it hard to make connections and complete expository assignments.

If given the opportunity to trade places with any one person or character, Lauren would trade with Harry Potter from the J.K. Rowling series. Lauren admires Harry's humbleness and notes, "He always credits his successes to his friends and the family of teachers at Hogwarts. I would not be the teacher I am today if not for the help and support of all the staff at Franklin School and Bergenfield School District."

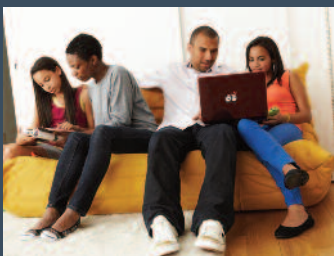
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Upcoming Events

MARCH 2 - READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY – A program of the National Education Association (NEA), now in its eighth year, NEA's Read Across America Day is celebrated annually on Dr. Seuss's birthday; however, this year it will be celebrated in New Jersey schools on March 1, 2013. Read Across America Day generates enthusiasm for reading nationwide and focuses the country's attention on how important it is to motivate children to read. Visit <http://www.readacrossamerica.org/>

NJFEA: RECRUITING TODAY'S STUDENTS TO BECOME TOMORROW'S TEACHERS – Become part of the growing network of New Jersey's middle and high schools that are sponsoring chapters of the New Jersey Future Educators Association (NJFEA) for students who are considering careers as future teachers. Through NJFEA, students can network with peers who aspire to become teachers, attend state-wide conferences and workshops, participate in state and national future teacher competitions, develop leadership skills, plan and implement service projects, and learn about scholarships and teacher preparation programs within New Jersey. Information about starting an NJFEA chapter or individual membership information can be found at www.tcnj.edu/futureeducators or by contacting Mr. Larry Fieber, Executive Director of the Center for Future Educators at 609-771-2464 or at fieber@tcnj.edu. NJFEA is funded by the New Jersey Education Association.

In the News....

Local, State and National Education News

DOE to Distribute Post Sandy Relief Aid – February 26, 2013

The New Jersey Department of Education will distribute \$1.25 million in federal disaster aid for eligible school districts which may apply for funds to reimburse post-storm costs, such as mental health assessments, staff overtime, substitute teachers and emergency transportation.

<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/13/02/25/nj-s-sandy-damaged-school-districts-eligible-for-federal-recovery-grants/>

http://www.phillyburbs.com/ap/state/nj/nj-offers-schools-post-disaster-grants/article_47cba7a1-82d2-5d43-a87c-70f05c599f29.html

http://www.northjersey.com/news/state/NJ_offers_schools_post_sandy_disaster_grants.html

Editorial: New Educator Evaluations are Necessary – February 22, 2013

The districts piloting a new educator evaluation program in New Jersey are leading the way to a system that will benefit students and educators.

http://www.nj.com/hunterdon-county-democrat/index.ssf/2013/02/editorial_new_teacher_assessme.html

New School Report Cards to Provide More Details on School and Student Performance – February 17, 2013

The Department of Education is putting the final touches on new school report cards, to be known as performance reports, which will expand and improve upon the data presented each year about every school in New Jersey.

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2013/02/new_school_report_cards_provid.html

Commissioner Cerf Visits Monmouth School Students Displaced by Sandy – February 13, 2013

Commissioner Chris Cerf visited students of the Marine Academy for Science and Technology to check on their status and to pledge the state's support and assistance to help the school recover from damage suffered from Hurricane Sandy.

<http://www.app.com/article/20130212/NJNEWS15/302120074/Education-commissioner-Cerf-visits-students-displaced-by-Sandy>

Digital Learning Day shines spotlight on tech in Shore area schools – February 7, 2013

Districts across the state participated in a variety of activities across the state to observe national Digital Learning Day.

<http://www.app.com/article/20130206/NJNEWS15/302060155/Digital-Learning-Day-shines-spotlight-tech-Shore-area-schools>